NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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What I Want for Christmas

by LESLEY-ANN BROWNE

How times have changed. If I were writing a list five years ago of what I wanted for Christmas it would be extremely different from today. Now don't get me wrong. I still expect gifts under that tree with my name on them. And I turn down the pages in the Sears *Christmas Wish Book* in hopes that someone will get the hint. But the holidays have become a time filled with our own traditions. It is no longer about asking for lots of stuff. There is new level of maturity in how the season is viewed and what is expected.

It is exciting each year to open the boxes of Christmas ornaments and decorations. We remember where each one was purchased or who had given it to us. Memories of relatives and friends who cannot be with us are especially strong throughout the holidays. It can be difficult at any time of the year when family members are absent, for whatever reason. But their absence seems more pronounced during the holidays when loved ones cannot be with us to share in the good times and celebrations.

So what will I ask for this year? If I thought I would get them I would include world peace and getting rid of child poverty and hunger. I would definitely ask for something for teachers and education. I could just send Santa a copy of the workload study. He can gift wrap it for government.

In preparation for this editorial I looked back over the other Christmas editorials printed in *The Bulletin*. I was kind of surprised that this is the ninth one that I have written. The rest of the year's editorials can be on an array of topics, but the December *Up Front* has, in my opinion, to have a Christmas theme or at least a Merry Christmas wish at the end. I could ignore the season all together, but that would be… well… unChristmaslike (spell check be damned.) My dilemma is how to wish everyone a Merry Christmas in a new and different way than I have in the last nine editorials.

So how to say that I wish you the best that the season has to offer, good cheer, happiness, peace, love, and good tidings, is my challenge. Let your hearts be light, enjoy time with family and friends, and may your troubles be miles away. And may these holiday wishes follow you into the new year and beyond.

During the holiday season, no matter what your customs and traditions, whether you celebrate the birth of Christ or just that Santa gives lots of presents, have yourself a merry little Christmas. And one more thing… please drink responsibly

Happy Holidays!

THE bulletin

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NEWS

LABRADOR CITY

Think it over, baby

There's a new baby at Menihek High School in Labrador City. Logan is an electronic parenthood simulation, which will be introduced to high school students following the Christmas vacation as the new year ensues at Menihek. The baby is the second addition to the "Think It Over, Baby" program which was introduced to only 15 schools this past June. Students enrolled in Human Dynamics 2201, taught by Ms. Ludlow, will be assigned Logan on a Friday afternoon and will be expected to care for the electronic baby as if it were an infant child. The baby will be returned the following Monday after it has been in the student's care for 48 hours. Sixty percent of the course is based around childcare, in which Logan will play a major role.

Students at Menihek High School learn about the responsibilities of caring for a baby in the "Think It Over, Baby" program.

The baby is wireless and is programmed by the teacher. It can be set to function on four levels – easy, medium, hard, and difficult, which is the equivalent of a colic infant. Each level influences the baby's temperament and behavior. Logan can be programmed to respond to various actions which it records for grading purposes. Students are given a wristband which they are required to wear while they have the baby. This allows Logan to recognize its parent. A second device is given to a babysitter who may care for Logan while the student is incapable of doing so. In addition, female students are given patches that can be clipped onto a shirt collar and simulate breastfeeding. Male students are given a bottle.

When the baby is returned to Ms. Ludlow, a data report allows her to assess whether Logan has been fed, burped, changed, and if it has sustained injury such as shaking or lack of head support. It also indicates how long the baby was left in the custody of the babysitter.

The purpose of this project is to allow students to experience parenthood and discourage adolescent sex. If students are able to understand the responsibility involved in caring for a child while still attending school, they may better protect themselves against the possibility of adolescent pregnancies. Hopefully, Logan will provide an immersive and educational school year.

ST. JOHN'S

Holy Cross Junior High abuzz with activity

Holy Cross Junior High School in St. John's has been exceptionally active this year. The staff, who came together six years ago with the restructuring of the school district, is dedicated to creating a learning environment where students benefit not just academically, but through learning moments that are more than just pencil and paper.

So far this year, the school has worked on creating an active learning situation for all the students. During the last week of September, the school celebrated World Milk Day. In a rather ingenious move, Art teacher, Ray Abbott, and Home Economics teacher, Lisa Saunders, traced out the outline of a huge cow on the floor of the gymnasium. Students lay around the outline and the remainder of the students in the school sat in the interior of the 'cow' to fill in the details. World School Milk Day has been celebrated on the last Wednesday in September since

2000. Its purpose is to celebrate milk in school for millions of children around the world. "Milk is recognized world wide as being important for healthy growth and development," says Ms. Saunders.

Students at Holy Cross Junior High form the outline of a cow on the floor of the gymnasium during World School Milk Day.

During the first weekend in October, the school hosted the Allied Youth Provincial Kick-Off weekend. During these three days, students from Allied Youth Posts from around the province came together to meet new people, make new friends and have fun. Over 30 members from the local youth group attended the Kick-Off, where students enjoyed mixer games, a dance, swimming at the Aquarena and a visit from several guest speakers from Nigeria, who spoke to the group about the present situation for the youth in their country. At the closing banquet on Saturday, the students had a great chance to reflect on the weekend and the new friends they had made. The Allied Youth program has been active in the province since the 1960s and information about it can be gathered from its website, www.alliedyouth.ca.

During the last weeks of October and early part of November, several of the classes at the school had a chance to welcome some special visitors of their own. Mr. Hammond, the Learning Resources Teacher, Mr. Locke, Grade 9 teacher, and Mrs. Hart, Grade 7 teacher, each took the opportunity to bring in their children to meet and interact with the Grade 8 Home Economics students who have been studying child care as part of their curriculum. Mr. Hammond's daughter, Abigail, is only six months old and students had a chance to watch her sit up on her own, play with her toys, and respond to the students who were there to see her. They had a chance to feed her and play with her for several classes. Mr. Hammond thought that "this was a great chance for the students to interact with a live child like the ones they have been learning about. Not to mention that they've been asking about her since she was born." Mr. Locke's son, Nathan, is about 1½ years old and came in to show the next stages of development to the students. Nathan played with them, sharing his toys and playing hide-and-go-seek with several of the students. Mrs. Hart's daughter, Madeline, is 2½ years old and showed the students the next stage in development, speaking and playing with the students in the classes.

Ms. Saunders noted: "Our Grade 8 students are currently studying the stages of development in the Child Care Unit. I could think of no better way to make this learning hands-on than to actually bring in a live infant, toddler, and preschooler! It's great to have such a cooperative staff to allow their children to be used as manipulatives!"

A student at Holy Cross Junior High receives some hands-on experience while feeding Learning Resources Teacher Walter Hammond's daughter, Abigail, as part of their study unit on Child Care.

With these sorts of educational opportunities, it is easy to see that Holy Cross Junior High School is working hard to offer some great learning situations to its students.

Dean of Education elected President of CADE

Dr. Alice Collins, Professor and Dean of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, was elected President of the Canadian Association of Deans of Education at its October meeting.

Dr. Collins grew up in Corner Brook and attended Memorial University (B.A., B.Ed., 1971). She studied at the University of Edinburgh and received her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Ottawa. She has been a teacher in Corner Brook and St. John's and Program Co-ordinator in the former Conception Bay Centre School Board.

Dr. Collins has served on provincial curriculum and ministerial advisory committees. She has extensive national participation in education as President, Canadian Association of Teacher Education (1999-2001), and President of the Canadian Society for the

Dr. Alice Collins

Study of Education (2001-2004). Dr. Collins is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences. She has served as an external review panel member for the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, the University of Prince Edward Island, the University of Manitoba, and the University of Ottawa. She has been a community volunteer with the Arthritis Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Cancer Society, and Chair of the Tuckamore Festival (Chamber Music in Newfoundland).

School expresses thanks for "Help for Hopedale" project

The staff of Macdonald Drive Elementary wish to express their gratitude for the overwhelming response to their request for school supplies for the students and staff of Amos Comenius Memorial School in Hopedale. In September, the school building and its contents were severely damaged due to fire, smoke and water.

"Over 50 boxes were filled with a wonderful assortment of items that were needed immediately", says Lisa Cobb, a teacher at Macdonald Drive Elementary. "All the staff would like to say thank you to our students and parents, and to our teachers who prepared educational materials to assist the Hopedale staff with their classroom lessons. To Mr. Combden, our Custodian, who prepared the boxes for packing, Mr. Hellings, a volunteer, who delivered them to Provincial Airlines for free transport to Labrador, to the Red Cross for donations of book bags with supplies, NL Containers Ltd. for cardboard containers – we were all enriched by the spirit of generosity and caring that made this effort such a success.".

Macdonald Drive Junior High very active this fall

On November 1, 2004, 25 students from Macdonald Drive Junior High School in St. John's took part in a forum sponsored by the United Nations Association in Canada. The school was selected as one of five schools across Canada to take part in a nationwide discussion on "Belonging and Integration". This initiative encompasses many facets of multiculturalism diversity and is meant to result in a template being created that will be used in all towns and cities in Canada.

Mr. David Lawton, Social Studies Department Head, welcomed Rida Abboud and Antoine Huss from the United Nations Association in Canada. These individuals instructed their participants in several topics including identity, disabilities, rights and freedoms and multiculturalism. Two students were selected by the group to represent Macdonald Drive Junior High School at a community round table discussion dealing with the same topics.

Students at Macdonald Drive Junior High listen intently to visitors from the United Nations Association in Canada.

Macdonald Drive Junior High School also recently held its Third Annual SPCA Drive. Headed by teacher Glen Connolly, this initiative resulted in a number of items being collected for this worthy cause. Mr. Connolly was happy to receive collars, blankets, a kennel, food, and pet toys from generous animal lovers! When the drive was completed, Ms. Cheryl Ellis, who works with the SPCA, was invited to the school.

Pictured at SPCA Drive (l-r): Glen Connolly, Cheryl Ellis and Principal Keith Coombs.

CENTRAL NEWFOUNDLAND

School district pilots Active Schools project

In response to the rising rates of obesity and incidences of Type II Diabetes in this province the Nova Central School Board is piloting the Active Schools project in five schools in Central Newfoundland this

school year. The five schools participating in this pilot project are Greenwood Academy, Campbellton; Lewisporte Academy, Lewisporte; Gill Memorial Academy, Musgrave Harbour; Smallwood Academy, Gambo; and William Mercer Academy, Dover. The focus of the project is to increase participation in, and attitudes towards, physical activity. The project will largely address grades Kindergarten to 6 (two schools housing grades K-8 and grades K-9 will include their junior high population as well).

This pilot project was initiated by the Active Living Committee in Gander. This committee consists of a group of interested health professionals who are concerned with the rising rates of obesity and incidences of Type II diabetes being seen in children in Central Newfoundland and in the province. The implementation of this pilot was made possible through donations from numerous partners including: Nova Central School District, Department of Tourism, Recreation, and Culture, Health and Community Services – Central, the Primary Health Care Renewal Project, the Central Wellness Coalition, Astra Zeneca, Merrck Frosst, Roche, GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer, NovoNorDisk, Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, Heart and Stroke Foundation, CFB 9 Wing Gander, Dr. Carmel Casey, Family Practitioner, and, Dr. Glen Loyson, Pediatrician. "Our school board has always been committed to providing safe and healthy schools for all children and teachers," says Charlie McCormack, Assistant Director (Programs) for the Nova Central School District, "and quality daily physical activity in our classrooms is another way to do this." This pilot project will see 20 minutes of quality daily physical activity added to the classrooms in the pilot schools through integration with the subjects being taught during that period.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

MUN Senate approves Special Education specialty

The Memorial University of Newfoundland Senate recently approved Special Education as an added specialty within Curriculum Teaching and Learning Studies. This Master of Education option builds on the Bachelor of Special Education degree (which is a required prerequisite for the program) and thus requires a thesis to achieve the degree of specialization appropriate to this level of study.

The program includes the Curriculum Teaching and Learning Studies core courses (E6100 Research Designs and Methods in Education, E6602 Curriculum Studies, and E6300 Teaching and Learning); two of E6712 The Nature and Assessment of Behaviour Disorders in Children, E6714 Principles and Practices of Exceptionality, and E6755 Nature and Assessment of Learning Disabilities; and a thesis. Regulations are included in those for all Curriculum Teaching and Learning Studies specializations (www.mun.ca/educ/grad/). Course descriptions are available on the grad website under Course Information. Applicants should describe a potential research topic; acceptance will depend on availability of an appropriate thesis supervisor. The next application deadline is February 1.

Any graduate student in the Master of Education programs may include the courses 6712, 6714, and 6755 in his/her program as electives. Teachers and educational leaders will find that these courses contribute well to their understandings of the educational needs of our diverse student populations.

Table tennis anyone?

"Table Tennis in every school in Canada" is the motto of Table Tennis Canada's new TOPS Table Tennis School program. Five provinces have already seen a successful start of the program, and Newfoundland and Labrador is slated to introduce the program for this school year.

The program will be available in Newfoundland and Labrador through the Newfoundland and Labrador Table Tennis Association (NLTTA) which has a long history of community, provincial, Atlantic, and national achievement. Successful clubs in places like Goose Bay, Labrador City, Norris Point, Gander, Carmanville, Springdale, Pilley's Island, Glovertown, CBS, St. John's, Sunnyside, Steady Brook, and many other communities have allowed students to enjoy the sport.

A Teacher's Manual and a reasonably priced, high quality equipment package are part of TOPS Table Tennis for schools. "Children learn physical skills, endurance and mental agility with the new program – and for teachers it is simple to follow. The lesson plans are self-explanatory and the technical explanations are very simple. My experience is that teachers and kids really enjoy the program," explains Attila Csaba, a National Development coach who has been working with the program for over two years.

The NLTTA promotes school-based table tennis across the province. They offer coaching courses, officials' certification, player camps, promotional demos, reduced prices on equipment purchases, club structuring expertise, and major tournaments. For more information contact the NLTTA by email: nltta@nl.rogers.com or contact Brian at 709-834-8402, or Scott at 709-834-0355.

New initiatives in Geographic education

As part of an ongoing effort to facilitate geographic education at all levels in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador chapter of the Council for Geographic Education (CCGE) hosted a number of meetings and discussions chaired by Dr. Stuart Semple of the CCGE on October 22, with representatives from the NLTA, Eastern School District, Ministry of Education, and Memorial University. As well as sharing ideas and conversation, the group discussed how all those interested in Geography, Social Science, and environmental matters could cooperate more effectively.

Dr. Stuart Semple of the CCGE and René Wicks of the NLTA discuss geographic education over lunch.

The provincial chapter of the CCGE has both K-12 and university educators with expertise in geographic education curriculum and professional development. It is a forum where all aspects of Geography and Geographical Education can be discussed, ideas exchanged, and resources shared. Its purpose is to promote Geographic Education throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and to demonstrate the value of Geography in understanding the environment and culture of our province, as well as throughout Canada and the world at large. Membership is free! It is open to everyone interested in Geography, the environment, or Geographic Education throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

What can the CCGE and the Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter offer you? The CCGE is supported by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. It has a variety of resources available to teachers of Geography, including maps, web links, and information sheets covering numerous aspects of the Geography of our province, Canada, and the world. The CCGE is active throughout Canada and provides the opportunity to interact with teachers of Geography across the country.

If you would like more information about Geography or about the CCGE, or if you have a question, you can reach the local chapter by contacting Dr. Norm Catto, Professor of Geography, Memorial University, St. John's, NL, A1B 3X9, Tel: 709-737-8413, Fax: 709-737-3119, ncatto@mun.ca or visit the CCGE website at www.ccge.org.

NLASAA goes online

The Newfoundland and Labrador Student Activity Advisors (NLASAA) are pleased to announce the official launch of NLASAA Online. The site contains student leadership links, NLASAA information and a guestbook for students and teachers.

This group, which is in its 15th year of existence, promotes student leadership throughout this province. From leadership camps to the highly successful Provincial Student Leadership Conferences, this group has motivated and inspired thousands of young people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. NLASAA chairperson Deborah Ball is also co-chair for the 2005 Provincial Student Leadership Conference in Exploits Valley High, Grand Falls-Windsor. This event will be held from October 21-24, 2005. Ms. Ball promises that next year's conference will have the same level of energy and enthusiasm that has always been associated with Provincial Student Leadership Conferences. For more information check out www.nlasaa.net.

CANADA

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) promotes the advancement of second language teaching throughout Canada by creating opportunities for professional development, by encouraging research and by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas between second language educators.

Two teachers from Newfoundland and Labrador are members of the CASLT Board of Directors for 2004. Susan Forward is Past President of the Board of Directors. Susan is an FSL teacher (Core and French Immersion) and assistant principal at Brother Rice Junior High School in St. John's. Valerie Pike, Department Head of Languages at Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's, is a Director at Large for 2004. Valerie teaches French Immersion and Core French

students in Grades 10-12 and oversees the delivery of all Core French and French Immersion, Spanish and Russian language programs and their related cultural and linguistic immersion components.

Further information on the CASLT can be found on their website at www.caslt.org or by contacting the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, 201-57 Auriga Drive, Ottawa, ON, K2E 8B2, Tel: 613-727-0994, Fax: 613-998-7094, admin@caslt.org.

Amnesty creates urgent action program for youth

Amnesty International has introduced an initiative called *Lifesavers* where abuses of children's rights are reported. One of the purposes of *Lifesavers* is to encourage other children to write the perpertrators of these crimes to help stop the human rights abuses.

The Amnesty International website contains information on the *Lifesavers* project including explanations of various abuse cases, why it is happening, what can be done, where to send a message/letters, can a letter really make a difference?, and where to find more information. This information, as well as letter writing tips, are available at www.amnesty.ca/take_action/lifesaver.

Amnesty is an international human rights awareness group. Since it was founded in 1961, it has won the Nobel Peace Prize (1977) for its work, and currently comprises over two million members world wide. Amnesty's work consists of investigating into reported human rights abuses, then publishing its results and calling for action, which usually involves writing letters to Canadian and foreign politicians in an attempt to help an individual such as a prisoner of conscience, whose rights are being violated, as well as to deter future abuses.

December 10th is International Human Rights Day, in commemoration of the signing of the 1949 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet on this momentous document's 55th anniversary, there remains much to be done to ensure that all individuals around the world enjoy its protection.

For further information or for a local student contact, please get in touch with Stephen Aylward, a Grade 12 student at Holy Heart of Mary High School in St. John's, saylward@gmail.com or 709-368-4000.

DEBORAH JOAN HILLIER (NEE MOSS), 1957 – 2004

Too frequently, those who inject sparkle and fun into the lives of others are taken away prematurely. So it was with Debbie Hillier. Debbie was taken from us a few days short of her forty-seventh birthday after a long courageous battle with cancer. She died as she had lived – optimistic, full of hope, considerate of others, focused on family, and buoyed by a sense of humour that never deserted her.

Debbie cannot be remembered without thinking first of her sparkling wit, her lively humour, her sense of drama, and her animated storytelling. Her stories invariably involved "characters" she had met in the classroom to which she committed far too much time; or to the Glee Club where her beautiful guitar inspired and lifted; or the church choir which she bullied and cajoled into life; or revolved around her long bus/boat trips to St. Pierre where, occasionally, she had to explain the self-induced illnesses of certain miscreants – "Oh, he had the flu!". Duh! The printed word cannot convey the punch which Debbie hung on "Duh". Her fall-guy teacher-husband Dave stood up amazingly well as First Victim.

"The love she bore to learning..." Debbie left an indelible imprint upon all she met. Her teaching career took her through Twillingate, Alberta, and Roddickton where she spent the last 25 years of a life dedicated to French, music, and students. Great expectations inspired her to push kids beyond where they thought they could go. Realism tempered great expectations with an honest caring and empathy.

Debbie will be missed, truly missed, by all of us. Unspoken though it might be, we want her husband Dave, daughter Ashley whom she saw convocate with an honours degree in biochemistry in May, and son Jonathan, teacher-in-training and heir to her wit and humour, to know that she has become part of us, too.

(Submitted by friends and colleagues of Cloud River Academy)

E. ROSS NOSEWORTHY, 1952 – 2004

Death can sometimes be sudden. This was indeed the case on July 12, 2004, as family, friends, colleagues, and students were shocked and extremely saddened by the sudden passing of Ross Noseworthy.

Ross was born on March 22, 1952, at Spaniard's Bay. After completing his high school education at Ascension Collegiate, Bay Roberts, he attended Memorial University graduating with a B.A. and B.P.Ed. The first two years of his teaching career took him to Upper Ferry in the Codroy Valley. He then moved to Seal Cove, Fortune Bay, where he taught for two years. His next move was down the road a few miles to Hermitage/Sandyville, where he finished his teaching career. Upon his retirement in June 2003, Ross and his wife Maxine, moved back to Shearstown to be closer to their families.

Throughout his teaching career, Ross was a willing participant in many Physical Education Committees at the district level. As well, he was actively involved in committee work at the Branch level of the NLTA, and on occasion served as a member of the executive of the Seagaulher Branch. This unselfish involvement extended into the community of Hermitage / Sandyville where he served as chair of the town's Recreation Committee, spent several years as a leader in the Scout Movement, and volunteered his time coaching Peewee softball. Ross was also a founding member of the Hermitage Ranger Patrol and was instrumental in establishing the local shooting range.

Ross had great respect for his profession. When he planned an event, whether it was the annual sports day during Education Week or a provincial tournament, his involvement made sure that if it was worth doing, it was worth doing well. His dedication to his profession was best exemplified in his interest in and involvement with extra-curricular activities. Ross spent countless hours coaching, refereeing, supervising, and travelling with sports teams. On many occasions he talked about the enjoyment he got from working with young people. The real beneficiaries of this enjoyment, of course, were the students he taught along the way.

Although much of his time was consumed by his profession, Ross did find time for his other great interest, the great outdoors. His many hunting and fishing trips were not always successful ones, but that didn't mean he was disappointed. Ross simply enjoyed 'a day in the country', where quite often his companion was his wife, Maxine.

For those of us who worked with Ross, we remember his gentle nature. Even though his muscular build could be intimidating, the children at the primary level simply adored him which is a true testament of his gentleness. As one reflects on his life, it would be impossible not to remember the fun and laughter that Ross brought to the staffroom and social events. He loved a good joke and his laughter shortened many long days.

Ross is survived by his wife, Maxine, sons Curtis (Vanessa), Darrell, Brendan, daughter Lisa, grandchild Tori, mother Elizabeth, two sisters and six brothers.
(Submitted by the Staff of John Watkins Academy)

W. BLANCHE (BRAZIL) CASE, 1917 – 2004

Put your arms around me;
Hold me close before we part.
Let the soft sweet tears from your blue eyes,
Melt the pain in your cold, cold heart.

The earliest memory I have of Mom includes words from this old song sung by her on a bright summer morning many years ago. The tones of her beautiful voice reverberated from the kitchen to my bedroom and stirred me from my sleep. This melody called me to another day of playful activity. Many times I recall the days of my youth and thank God for my parents and family; that I was so privileged to have enjoyed such a quality of life. Much of the credit I give to Mom who was the anchor in our lives.

On May 26, 1917 in the small settlement of Trinity, Trinity Bay, my mother Blanche was born. The premature birth meant that she was so small and weak she could not breathe on her own. Her father Joseph kept her alive using his breath until her lungs were strong enough to move on their own.

In 1922 the family moved to Spaniard's Bay, and it was here that Blanche received her early schooling and graduated from high school in 1934. She acquired a course in teacher training and accepted a position at the Roman Catholic School in Tilton where she taught for eight years.

In 1944 she married Ralph Case of Salmon Cove and put her teaching career on hold to dedicate her time to raising Ray, Rosalind and Gerald. She carried out her responsibilities as a wife and a mother with patience, persistence, love and affection, leaving her children with a treasure of priceless memories that will defy time's erosion. She also became a very faithful member of the United Church Women (Ladies Aid), served as a C.G.I.T. Leader and was organist of the church for 30 years.

In 1966, with her family grown and two of her children in the teaching profession, Blanche decided to return to teaching. The training she earlier received gave her the equivalent of, what was then, a "B License". In time she completed a Grade IV Teaching Certificate through part-time studies. She accepted a position as principal of a two-room school in Flatrock, Conception Bay. Over the years she also taught in Freshwater, Salmon Cove, and Victoria. Her firm but gentle approach in teaching and classroom management won her the love and respect of her pupils. Both students and staff members fondly recall her ever-popular "Christmas Drills".

My sister and I had the unique privilege of having this dear lady not only as a wonderful mother, but also as a colleague and as a fellow student doing university courses together. She was also privileged to have taught four of her seven grandchildren.

In 1981, after an additional 15 years of teaching, she retired. However, she continued to keep in contact with the school through socials and other special events. She also enjoyed traveling and remained active in the church until early in 2004 when her health began to fail.

On August 1, with a grateful but broken-hearted family at her bedside, her life's pilgrimage came to an end. Joseph Brazil held her through the night 87 years ago and with his own breath gave breath to the tiny infant God had given him and Mary. On a quiet Sunday morning last summer her children and grandchildren held her until her last breath was taken and God took her home.
(Submitted by Raymond A. Case)

Best Wishes for the Holidays

Christmas is arguably the busiest time of year for many teachers. In addition to our normal classroom duties many of us are involved with after school practice with bands, choirs, recitations and skits in preparation for school concerts. Children are more hyper than normal "while visions of sugar plums dance through their heads" in anticipation of the big day. And all this before we've had any opportunity to prepare for Christmas in our own homes with our own families, neighbours and friends.

The days fly by and remarkably, magically, through some miracle, what often seemed like chaos and confusion coalesce into an organized, triumphant production. You heave a huge, silent sigh of relief and parents are congratulating you on "the best Christmas concert ever."

We seldom pause to question the "miracle" that occurs to make it the best Christmas concert ever. The "miracle", of course, is the teacher exhibiting the greatest gift of all – the gift of love. The invisible work and sacrifice is seldom seen, as is the case with many gifts of this nature. We accept as our thanks the learning experience for the children and the excitement and enhanced self-esteem reflected in their shining eyes and smiling faces as they do their "parts" with groups and individually. This is the "gift" that the teacher offers the student, the proud parents and grandparents and the community. This gift of love is very much in keeping with the Season.

If I could give each teacher a gift this Christmas Season it would be the gift of respect and recognition for a job well done.

On behalf of your Provincial Executive Council I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Fred

It is almost impossible to believe that, after what seems like only a few weeks since the new school year began, we are quickly approaching another Christmas season. It is certainly true that time passes quickly for busy people. We all know how busy (and often hectic) a teacher's life is, so it is no surprise that many of you will feel once again that Christmas has managed to sneak up on you.

It is, therefore, all the more important that we make use of the Christmas season as a break from the demands of teaching; an opportunity to relax and rejuvenate ourselves while enjoying the closeness and company of family and friends. Although the actual preparations for the holiday season can, in themselves, increase our hectic pace of life for a time, it is important to seize the Christmas "break" as an opportunity to briefly slow things down. It is also an opportunity for us to stop and give thanks for the many positive things we enjoy in our lives and on how we can best reflect the true spirit of Christmas in sharing our good fortune with those less fortunate.

I offer best wishes for a very happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year to each and every one of our members, from all the staff who work on your behalf at the NLTA office. May the peace and love that are the essence of the Christmas message be with you throughout the holiday season and afterwards.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Christmas! 'Tis the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall, the genial fire of charity in the heart.

– Washington Irving

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CTF Public Opinion Poll

Class Size Reduction Cited as Top Spending Priority in Education

A national public opinion poll reveals that an increasing number of Canadians believe strongly in the correlation between smaller class sizes and improved students' performance in school.

According to a recent Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) commissioned poll, most Canadians believe that reducing class sizes should be the number one spending priority in education. Some 76 per cent of those surveyed agreed that class sizes in public schools are presently too large.

"In each of the five National Issues in Education polls commissioned by CTF between 1997 and 2004, the Canadian public has cited class size reduction as the most pressing spending priority in education," explains CTF President Terry Price.

The 2004 poll shows that 26 per cent selected class size reduction as the highest spending priority, followed by 22 per cent for curriculum improvements and 15 per cent for services for students with special needs. Province-wide student achievement tests ranked the lowest with only 5 per cent of the public and 0 per cent of teachers supporting this exercise as a spending priority.

"The public associates small classes with better discipline and with teachers giving more personal attention," says Ms. Price. "More individualized attention for students means achieving the level of performance that matches the students' abilities and learning skills."

The stress that crowded classrooms is putting on young or beginning teachers was also noted by those surveyed. According to the poll results, 77 per cent believed that young or beginning teachers leave the profession after a few years because of large class sizes and increasingly heavy workload. The second reason cited is that schools do not have enough experts and resources to help teachers assist students with special needs.

"Teachers with small classes can spend time and energy helping each child succeed. Smaller classes also enhance safety, discipline and order in the classroom. When qualified teachers teach smaller classes, kids learn more. It's simply common sense and studies show that it works to increase student achievement," says Ms. Price.

"A growing body of research demonstrates that students attending small classes in the early grades make more rapid educational progress than students in larger classes, and that these achievement gains persist well after students move on to larger classes in later grades," continues Ms. Price.

Teachers have long had concerns with growing class sizes as public education funding has been cut in the last few years. There has been significant research, including Project STAR, the Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio project, which was conducted in Texas in the mid-80s. The study, involving 2.4-million students in Grades 1 through 7, found that student achievement fell as the student/teacher ratio increased for every student above an 18 to 1 ratio. It also found that students in smaller classes significantly outperformed students in regular-sized classes and regular-sized classes with a teacher aide.

The research is clear – class size is vital to the success of our students. If small class size does improve achievement, then cost should be no obstacle especially if one compares the human and financial costs associated to dropouts and remedial education.

"The time has arrived for the politicians to take note and to reinvest in public education in a meaningful way," concludes Ms. Price.

The National Issues in Education Poll, commissioned by CTF every two years, gauges the public's views and opinions on public education in Canada. The Poll was conducted by Vector Research and Development Inc. from May 6 to 11, 2004, with 1,001 Canadians throughout the country. In a sampling theory, in 19 cases out of 20, the results based on a random sample of 1,001 will differ by no more than plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

CTF has 14 provincial and territorial Member organizations (www.ctf-fce.ca/en/aboutus/member.htm) representing over 200,000 teachers across the country. Among many of its national initiatives and projects, CTF conducts in-depth research on issues related to education, the teaching profession and children and youth.

"... 77 per cent believed that young or beginning teachers leave the profession after a few years because of large class sizes and increasingly heavy workload."

Questions & Answers

School Closure and Salary Issues

by PERRY DOWNEY

Q. Does a substitute teacher get paid if school is closed due to weather conditions, lack of heating, or any cause as specified in the Schools Act?

A. If a substitute teacher is contracted to work at a school on a particular day and that school is subsequently closed due to inclement weather, lack of heating, or other cause specified under Section 32 of the Schools Act, then the substitute has been "deemed to have kept school" and therefore **must** receive salary for that period of time. **This requirement is effective whether or not the teacher received prior notification of the school closure before leaving for school or arriving at school.**

The particular article of the Collective Agreement dealing with this issue is Article 49.04, and it distinguishes between situations when the school is closed for weather or any other cause (under Section 32 of the Schools Act), as compared to situations when the school remains open, but previously contracted substitute services are not required for some other reason.

"This requirement is effective whether or not the teacher received prior notification of the school closure before leaving for school or arriving at school."

Article 49.04 (a) states that: *For salary purposes, substitute teachers shall be deemed to have kept school on any day or part thereof where the school is closed pursuant to Section 32 of the Schools Act, 1997.* That section of the Schools Act requires that a teacher in a school shall, for the purpose of determining payment of salary, be considered to have taught on a day or any part thereof when the school is closed for any of the reasons contained in that section. These reasons would include: inclement weather, by order of the Minister of Health for health reasons, school repairs, failure of the sewage system or other cause of a similar nature, lack of heat, etc. Thus, if school is closed, under Section 32 and Article 49.04 (a), previously contracted substitute teachers are "deemed to have kept school" and must receive salary.

Q. When would a substitute not get paid?

A. If the services of a substitute teacher are not required for reasons other than school closure under Section 32, and the teacher is notified before arriving at the school, then the substitute teacher doesn't receive pay. For example, if a substitute teacher was contracted to substitute for another teacher who would be attending a workshop, and the workshop was cancelled, the substitute teacher would not be paid for the day, provided prior notification (i.e. notification prior to reporting for duty) was given.

These latter situations are covered under Article 49.04 (b), which states that: *For salary purposes, substitute teachers shall be deemed to have kept school on any day or part thereof where previously contracted substitute services are not required for any other reason(s), and the substitute teacher is not notified prior to reporting for duty at the school that his or her services are not required.*

Additional information on this issue can be found in the NLTA Infosheet "Substitute Teacher Member and Benefits." Inquiries on this matter should be directed to the Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Perry Downey is an Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services Division, at the NLTA.

What Teachers Should Know

Personal Property in the Workplace

by STEFANIE TUFF

The NLTA often receives inquiries about compensation for loss of or damage to teachers' personal property while at school, and this school year is no exception. This issue is dealt with in Article 34 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 35 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement) and all teachers should be aware of and understand the implications of these provisions. There are two types of personal property identified in Article 34 – "personal effects which the teacher would reasonably have in his/her possession during the normal performance of his/her duty" and "tools, equipment, or other materials" which the teacher has received written permission from the School Board to use in the performance of teaching duties.

The first category of personal property includes items such as clothing, footwear and eyeglasses. If, in the performance of his/her duty, a teacher suffers a loss of or damage to any such personal effects, he/she may be entitled to monetary compensation, up to a maximum amount of $325. For example, if a student in a laboratory class spills a chemical on the teacher's shoes and the shoes are thereby damaged or ruined, the teacher may be entitled to compensation for the value of the shoes, up to a limit of $325. The amount of compensation will depend upon proof of the value of the item damaged or lost.

The second category is intended to cover items that are used by teachers in performing their duties. Many teachers bring some of their own materials or equipment into the classroom as a means of enhancing the learning environment. An art teacher might use some pieces from his own art collection to illustrate a certain style or technique to students. A social studies teacher might bring items purchased during her own travels into the classroom to highlight certain elements of other cultures.

In the past couple of months, the NLTA has received several inquiries from teachers who are considering bringing their own computers and other technology equipment into their classrooms. Initiatives such as these are commendable and demonstrate the high level of dedication and creativity that teachers in this province put into their work. However, the items in these examples are not "personal effects" that a teacher would reasonably be expected to have in his/her possession at school. Therefore, in order to be protected from loss of or damage to such items, teachers need to have written authorization from their employer to use them in the course of their teaching duties before bringing the items into the school. A leaky school roof on a rainy night could easily ruin a computer, travel souvenir or valuable painting and, in the absence of written permission from the School Board, the compensation provided in Article 34 would not apply. In some cases, if written authorization from the School Board is not granted, personal home insurance policies might provide coverage; however, this would depend on the particulars of each individual situation and teachers are advised to consult with their insurer and request written confirmation of coverage before taking personal belongings into the workplace.

The Collective Agreement also stipulates that, in any case of loss or damage to personal effects or other items, the incident must be reported in writing by the teacher to the Director of the School Board within five working days of the discovery of the loss or damage. If this deadline is not met, a claim that would otherwise qualify for compensation could be denied. In addition, the School Board is not obliged to compensate a teacher for any loss of or damage to personal property that is caused by the teacher's own negligence.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division at the NLTA.

When Sick Leave Has Been Exhausted

Various Benefits Available to Teachers

by DON ASH

In response to a question at a recent school representative seminar in Gander, I provided a detailed explanation of the interplay between various benefits available to teachers who unfortunately have health problems beyond available sick leave. The school reps commented that it was the first time that they fully understood the relationship between sick leave, LTD and other benefits and asked me to write an article for *The Bulletin*. This article is my attempt to replicate that explanation.

Article 15 of the Provincial Collective Agreement provides a formula for paid sick leave available to teachers. In the event a teacher's illness or disability continues beyond available paid sick leave, there are other potential income sources that can be explored.

"The Long Term Disability Insurance plan is an important part of minimizing risk against a loss of regular income. It is important that teachers apply for these benefits early in their illness and long prior to sick leave expiring."

Employment Insurance (EI)

A teacher can access 15 weeks of EI sickness benefit (currently $413 per week) while school is in session by applying for EI and providing a sick leave note from the doctor, and a record of employment (ROE) from the school board indicating the last paid sick day. When applying for Employment Insurance, the teacher should request that two weeks of paid sick leave be used as the EI waiting period, thereby eliminating a two-week gap in income. The EI sickness benefit is paid even if a teacher is receiving Long Term Disability benefit.

Long Term Disability Insurance (LTD)

A teacher should apply for Long Term Disability Insurance benefit (formerly called Salary Continuation) 3 to 4 months prior to sick leave expiring or as early as possible upon becoming ill or disabled. Applications can be obtained from Johnson Inc., our insurance administrator, and submitted to Manulife Financial for medical adjudication. If a medically verifiable illness is confirmed showing a wholly and continuous medical inability to teach, the application will be approved and a tax-free benefit of 85% of net salary will be paid. This benefit can be paid for up to two years when disabled from teaching and up to age 60 thereafter, if medically disabled from any occupation. However, if a teacher's illness/disability is "likely to be permanent" or is "severe and prolonged" the teacher will be required to apply for Teachers' Disability Pension and/or Canada Disability Pension, and any amount payable from these sources will offset or reduce dollar for dollar the amount paid by LTD. The idea is to provide a "reasonable" level of income from all sources.

For example, if 85% of a teacher's net income is $3,600 per month and the teacher is approved for LTD, the amount paid by Manulife is $3,600. But, if the teacher is approved for CPP disability at $900 per month, Manulife pays $2,700 per month. If the teacher is in receipt of CPP disability at $900 per month and TPP disability at $2,000 per month, the teacher receives $900 from CPP, $2,000 from TPP, and Manulife pays $700 to top up to $3,600 per month. If the income from TPP and CPP exceeds the $3,600 (85% of net income) then no benefit is payable from LTD.

Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP Disability)

In the event a teacher's illness/disability prevents the teacher from efficiently performing the duties of their occupation, and the illness/disability is "likely to be permanent", a teacher can obtain their pension "early" by applying for disability pension through

the Department of Finance. A medical adjudication will be performed by a doctor contracted by the Department of Finance. If approved, the pension can be payable immediately following the last paid sick leave. For example, a 40-year-old teacher with 15 years of pensionable service and a 30% pension accrual who is permanently disabled from teaching would receive 30% of the average of their best five years of salary which begins following their last paid sick leave and payable until death. Note that current legislation refers to 'disabled from teaching' only.

Canada Pension Plan (CPP Disability)
If a teacher's illness is "severe and prolonged", i.e. a teacher is disabled from any occupation for an indefinite duration, the teacher should apply for CPP disability, and if approved, may receive CPP disability on top of paid sick leave, if paid sick leave has not yet expired. This benefit continues as long as the teacher is disabled from any occupation. Under certain circumstances, the benefit may continue for a period of time after the return to work.

In summary, the benefits available to teachers are designed to protect their income in the event sick leave has been exhausted. The Long Term Disability Insurance plan is an important part of minimizing risk against a loss of regular income. It is important that teachers apply for these benefits early in their illness and long prior to sick leave expiring. EAP services are also available to assist with issues that may arise as a result of a prolonged illness. All teachers are encouraged to contact an administrative officer at the NLTA in the event of a prolonged illness.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division at the NLTA.

Wellness is… a Healthy Workplace!

by CLAUDETTE E. S. COOMBS

Wellness is a uniquely personal state of existence. It encompasses all avenues of our lives and all components of our being. The intimate, personal side of wellness is determined by our internal resources and how we respond to external stressors. The societal aspect of wellness is a function of our interactions with environmental challenges. To be healthy we must start by taking responsibility for how we live our lives. Although these lifestyle choices influence our capacity for health, that capacity is realized at a level according to supports we experience in our external environments.

What makes a workplace healthy?

We naturally think about the facility and its physical conditions. Those things are very important and are never more noticeable than when we have lost them. However, if we have the basics, there are more significant contributors to our workplace health. According to research, interpersonal relationships actually determine how we interpret the health of our workplace. Being treated with respect is the number one characteristic ranked by 2,500 Canadian employees in a March 2000 survey reported in the *National Journal of Human Resource Management*. Personal and social aspects of work were considered more significant than economic benefits or flexible schedules. The notable implication of this data is that when employee expectations are not met, there is job dissatisfaction. Other studies indicate that we are less satisfied with our jobs when we feel that we have no voice in what happens, when our efforts are not recognized and when we feel unfairly treated. When we are dissatisfied we tend to feel less committed, miss more time from work, experience more health complications and have diminished performance, productivity and sense of accomplishment. This has a negative impact on the system and causes problems due to low staff morale, higher rates of absenteeism or presenteeism (going to work disillusioned or unwell) and greater turn-over of staff. On the personal side, the impact of job dissatisfaction affects our quality of life, family or home relationships and our health. Working harder and longer does not translate into the achievement of better results or greater productivity. Instead, it often means that staff are at high risk of, or already experiencing, negative health consequences and may have succumbed to the coping technique of presenteeism.

How does a healthy workplace benefit us?

It isn't difficult to see how a healthy workplace can benefit not only the specific workers and employer, but also society in general. Avoiding unhealthy complications is a goal which also encourages optimal performance and productivity. Generating a respectful, positive and supportive work culture which supports work-life balance in policy, program and practice makes good sense all the way around.

Fitting this idea into the school setting translates into an environment where there is consciousness and recognition of issues affecting staff and an effort to minimize the negative impact while strengthening the necessary supports. This gives us a better sense of job fulfillment and reduces personal and professional stressors, thereby relieving some of the home pressure that ultimately creates a happier, healthier teacher. Of course the domino effect ensures that this teacher is then better able to deal effectively with classroom challenges, and that filters down to more positive interactions with students.

To achieve these desirable and much coveted results, a school must have good leadership and a strong, health-conscious, organizational foundation.

What makes good workplace leadership?

The work culture often corresponds to the values of the leadership. When respect, recognition, compassion, trust, commitment, clear expectations and fairness are

expressed and reinforced by those who set and administer the organizational policy, we can expect that employees will adopt a similar interaction style. There are many things beyond the control of the teacher and the administrator, but research indicates that despite difficult work environments, the quality of our work lives can be considerably enhanced by positive employment relationships. Sometimes just taking the time to listen and acknowledge the impact of workload demands is enough for teachers to feel that they are appreciated. This can be enough to give the boost we need to try to improve the system while we continue working through it. ***Caution:*** Listening should not ever be just an opportunity for teachers to vent frustrations without also taking responsibility to be constructive. We daily face situations that we are incapable of individually changing, whether that is poverty or a monumental system that doesn't seem to be working for us "today". That does not justify a complacent resignation to the status quo and should not prevent us from creatively seeking solutions on our local scale. Good leadership inspires this process in an environment where positive change is always encouraged.

What can we do to improve the system?

Working as a team within the school setting we can be committed to constructing a physical and social environment that promotes health. While appreciating the human qualities contributing to workplace success, we can ensure that we act on things under our control or influence. As teachers we must:

- Use available resources and opportunities (technology, PD days, personal interviews) to enhance and use skills that support a healthy approach to life.
- Find or create opportunities to engage in physical and mental exercise.
- Listen and communicate clear expectations.

As administrators we have even more responsibility in setting the tone and climate around the school. It is also a critical duty to focus on people. When staff feel respected, valued and supported they are much more willing, and able, to function at peak performance, even under chaotic or less than desirable conditions. To encourage the development and maintenance of a healthy workplace we must:

- Introduce healthy workplace strategies, as part of the School Development Process which can build a road map to health.
- Recognize and support staff. Try to know, understand and accommodate factors, such as health and family issues, which can have a negative impact on individuals.
- Wherever possible, encourage participation in decisions affecting teachers.
- Work with staff to identify workplace areas needing improvement, healthy practices to incorporate into daily school life and achievable health strategies which use current, or easily obtained, resources.
- Communicate carefully, clearly and concisely.

We need to support each other in achieving our common goal. Above all, recognize and set our own limits. Until we care for ourselves, we are not able to be a positive example nor have the resources left to meet others' needs. Airlines have a good reason for telling passengers to put on their own masks before helping others... no matter how tempting it is to try otherwise!

Claudette Coombs is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Claudette Coombs (ext. 242) or Marie Wall (ext. 265).

Who Would You Pick to Pack Your Parachute?

A Conversation Remembered... A Conversation to Have Again

by BEVERLEY PARK

"... after the grades are assigned we need to be really mindful about the inferences we and others may draw from these grades. At best, a grade is a very incomplete picture of the person to whom it is assigned."

Last spring I attended a conference where the experts informed and engaged participants with what has become the "flavour of the month" for most educational jurisdictions in North America – accountability. As informative, challenging and stimulating as the presentations were, in some instances the conversations after the microphones were turned off were just as thought provoking. I am going to try to describe one of these conversations that saw three or four delegates dissecting the issue of testing and grading. One started by asking the others who they would choose to pack their parachute based on the kids' grades. He had read in a recent book an anecdote describing how testing and scoring led to people making assumptions and drawing conclusions about ability. Let's see if I can engage you in that same conversation. So, I am saying to you:

"You're a teacher... you make judgements every day about your students. If you are going on a skydiving exercise, who do you want to pack your parachute?" Let's look at a few of the (pretend) students in your class and see who you'd choose.

How about Mike? Mike is very conscientious. He is reliable, courteous, and punctual. He is somewhat shy. His work is always completed and handed in on time. On the course you taught him there were ten different graded assignments. These built one on another so that performance on each progressive assignment would indicate the understanding that Mike had of all the work covered up to then. At the end of term all scores are averaged for a final grade.

[*Psst: Does this sound like it really could be your class? It sounded familiar to me!*]

Mike's no quitter but though he tries hard, his assessments are consistently mediocre. Regularly scoring between 45% and 50% on the assignments, his final grade on the course is 50%. He passes, barely.

Or maybe you'd consider Tim as your parachute packer. Tim, a classmate of Mike's, is an entirely different sort of fellow. He is intelligent and quick with his work – when he does it! He is popular, witty, and independent, which may account for his poor attendance record. In fact, Tim did well on all the assignments he handed in, scoring in the 87 to 93 range on all of them. The problem is, he had trouble getting motivated and only handed in half of them, though he did complete the final three. Despite his high scores on those he submitted, when taken cumulatively, his final grade for the course was 46%.

Stop for a moment. So, who's it to be? Think about it. My guess is that in choosing, you made some sort of comparison between the few pieces of information you had available to you. If you picked Mike you probably focused on the fact that he was diligent, reliable and consistent, in spite of being only minimally competent in the course you taught. If you chose Tim on the other hand, it was likely that you recognized that he is bright and quick and has provided evidence of ability, despite his final grade.

How does any of this help you with your decision? What do the results really show? Mike and Tim were only four points apart in their grade... but consider how truly different they are! Wasn't Tim's grade more of a reflection of his attendance record? On the final assignment, one that required cumulative understanding of the concepts covered in the

previous assignments, he scored 92. Mike, however, only scored 50 on this assignment and this was his highest score of the term. Was Mike's grade a tribute to his diligence?

All of this underlines the fact that we need to be conscious of the implications of the way we grade students, how we arrive at a 50% and what that 50% represents in the end. Just as importantly, after the grades are assigned we need to be really mindful about the inferences we and others may draw from these grades. At best, a grade is a very incomplete picture of the person to whom it is assigned.

So, in case you are wondering who I would pick to pack my parachute… Ummmm, not sure. Unless the score I was looking at was in a course on parachute packing (and I'd like to be sure that there was a practical component to the course, not just theory; and a practical performance assessment, not just a pen and paper test) the grades wouldn't be of any use to me in making my decision!

You may have read the same book as the guy at the conference… and I regret that I cannot recall the title… but I believe it was a conversation worth having then, and it's a conversation that should be had in every staff room in every school. As we head toward reporting time we should be aware of the many things that may be implied by, assumed and deduced from a simple number or letter. It gives us reason to stop and consider how we assign grades, and what people understand by the 50% or the C. Think about it. Talk about it!… and if you go skydiving, be careful who packs your parachute!

Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division at the NLTA.

Project Overseas 2004

Pearl of Africa

by ANNETTE DUNN

Each year, the Canadian Teacher's Federation sponsors Project Overseas to a variety of developing countries. I feel very fortunate to have been part of a team that travelled this past summer to Uganda in East Africa. In preparation for this trip, I endeavoured to research and learn as much as I could about Uganda – its history, culture, people and above all, its education system.

Along with the research came a flurry of e-mails with three other Canadian teachers from across Canada who would be my teammates for this project. At a four-day orientation session held in Ottawa in July, I finally got to meet them as well as the 45 other teachers from across Canada who would be teaming up in groups of varying sizes to head out to other developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East. At these sessions we were given some idea of what to expect both personally and professionally over the course of our project.

Annette pictured with teachers in her Language Arts group.

Upon arrival in Entebbe, Uganda, we were greeted with great enthusiasm by members of UNATU (Uganda National Teacher's Union). A short, but fast and bumpy ride, brought us to the capital city, Kampala which was brimming with energy, color and life. I was struck by the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the people as they meandered their way through the busy streets carrying huge loads of goods on bicycles or on their heads. Open markets contained a plethora of goods ranging from household items and clothing to fruits and vegetables. The streets were simply overflowing with motorized vehicles of all shapes and sizes, but virtually devoid of the street signs and speed limits that we take for granted.

Uganda is truly deserving of its title, "Pearl of Africa". So named by Winston Churchill, it is breathtakingly beautiful. With lush, green vegetation, red soil, the intricate patterns of tea plantations and the Nile River as one of its star attractions, Uganda is a country that has fought back against poverty, war and disease. The people exude a warmth and sincerity that belie the many difficulties they have faced and

Annette distributes pencils to students at Namilyango School in Mukono, Uganda.

are a testament to their great resilience and resolve.

A visit to an area school gave us some perspective in terms of the conditions that teachers and students work under. Certainly one of the highlights of our stay, the school visit opened our eyes to the realities faced by teachers and students in this country. Overloaded classes (80:1), limited textbooks (40:1), multi-aged classes, few to no school resources/materials, lack of proper nutrition, HIV/Aids and gender disparity are just some of the challenges faced by students and teachers in this part of the world. Unlike their markets, the classrooms are not brimming with

color or overflowing with goods. Brown, bare walls greet them everyday. Yet, they remain committed to education as they truly see it as a key ingredient in developing their nation. During our visit, the choir performed a song that focused on this very topic. What became obvious each time I heard a children's choir was that song and dance are seen as tools with which to educate and generate awareness of the issues facing the present generation. For me, visiting a school such as this was a dream come true. It was inspiring to me that, despite not having shoes, playthings and the fancy gadgets that we take for granted, these children were happy. They were smiling and running about, participating in a soccer game and simply glowing with pride in themselves. As I met and talked to students and teachers I was touched beyond words and truly warmed by their smiles and the sincere welcome that we received. It was, to say the least, an experience that I will never forget.

Our team, along with local co-tutors, worked with 60 teacher trainers (45 men and 15 women) from teacher colleges throughout Uganda. In plenary sessions, in-depth discussions were held on participatory learning methods, classroom management, teaching techniques, gender equity and HIV/AIDS awareness. Gender equity was an incredibly hot topic. Although cultural norms still pervade, we were delighted to see both women and men speak quite forcibly on this topic. Many questions were posed regarding Canadian customs and practices in this area. In smaller "subject groups" we addressed specific topics, techniques and methods as they pertained to Science, Language Arts, Math and Social Studies. The participants were incredibly well versed in current methodologies and approaches in the field of education. As we shared ideas, it became quite obvious that the challenge for them centered on how teachers could incorporate these methodologies and approaches without the necessary resource materials.

I am truly grateful to the NLTA, and CTF for providing me with this opportunity. A personal thank you to Beverley Park from the NLTA for the time she took in preparing me for this project. Bev has worked and continues to work very closely with the teacher's union and teachers in Uganda. Her insight was invaluable to me.

Annette Dunn is a Grade 5 teacher at Holy Trinity Elementary in Torbay

Investing 101

by PAT HOGAN

We have *Cooking 101*, *Computers for Dummies*, *Beginners Keyboarding*, and *Introduction to Yoga*, all inviting us to take the first step into a wonderland of new knowledge and experiences to enhance our lives! So why not *Investing 101*?

Long Term Investments: 10 years+ Time Frame
We typically invest long-term for some specific financial goals:

1. Home Equity
Over the years we dutifully pay down our mortgage and gradually acquire even more and more equity or ownership in our house. Our property also appreciates in another sense as real estate markets rise and all houses increase in value. So besides shelter, our home is an appreciating investment and a valuable financial asset that increases our net worth. As an asset, it has value that can be realized directly by renting or selling it or indirectly by using it to achieve "leverage", e.g. using this asset to secure a loan.

Example: A "home-equity-secured line of credit at prime" can be a particularly useful option appealing to those who have largely or entirely paid off their mortgages, e.g. retirees who are "house-rich" and "cash-poor", who wish to augment their monthly cash flow.

Our home is also our "principal residence" and as such is exempt from taxation both on sale and even after death to our estate.

2. (Registered) Retirement Savings
In addition to our pension, many couples supplement their retirement income with RRSPs. These combine such features as long-term compound growth, tax deferral until much later (and then at a low rate), an immediate tax deduction, and the possibility to split income using a spousal RRSP. RRSPs are the #1 tax reduction and #1 tax deferral strategy, widely available and a great savings vehicle. They can also be structured to suit any investor profile from "ultra-conservative" to "wildly aggressive". Various assets can be placed inside an RRSP – stocks or common shares (equities that produce capital gains), preferred shares (that produce dividend income), bonds, and cash (that both produce interest income). An RRSP is also the recommended direct recipient of your severance pay when you retire. RRSPs are a great way to build wealth, outpace inflation and defer taxes – a great investment strategy!

3. (Registered) Savings for a Child's Higher Education
Another long-term goal is assisting our children with financing their higher education. RESPs combined with the CESG (see article in Sept./Oct issue of *The Bulletin*) is the recommended route combining such features as long-term compound growth, tax deferral until much later (and then at a low rate), a free government grant, no restrictions on foreign investment, freedom of others to participate, flexibility in use later, etc.

While there is no tax deduction or credit associated with RESPs (unlike RRSPs), tax deferral and long term growth for the student beneficiary are present to ensure that inflation is held at bay.

Strategies to Grow Registered Accounts
a) With your advisor, select an overall asset mix suited to fit your investor profile.
b) Then select the highest quality, lowest cost investments that provide growth, income and capital preservation to match your goals.
c) Monitor and adjust your investment's performance over time.
d) Regular automatic deposits each pay period are the recommended "painless" route to grow these investments and take advantage of "dollar-cost-averaging".
e) Start registered accounts ASAP… even with a modest contribution each payday.

Mid-Term Investments: 3-5 year+ Time Frame
We also invest mid-term for other financial goals, e.g., a "sinking fund" to finance a special project… a trip, a new business venture, home renovations, a family wedding, a new car, etc. All these savings or investment accounts are considered "non-registered" and enjoy no particular tax advantage. The point is that we employ different strategies in dealing with them to maximize investment returns, beat inflation and minimize taxes. Taxes and inflation now become much more a menace. While a 7% rate of return inside an

RRSP (with no taxes during the accumulation phase) can easily outpace 3% inflation, outside an RRSP in a "non-registered" account, a 7% rate of return will net you only 1.3% after taxes and inflation. In fact, you have to earn 4.85% just to break even!

Strategies to Grow Non-registered Accounts

a) Inquire how your investment earnings will be paid… as interest income? As dividend income? As capital gains? Some combination of these? This question is not as important in dealing with RRSPs or other registered accounts, but it is critical in dealing with NON-REGISTERED investments.

b) Set up your non-registered account in the sole name of the lower income spouse… to reduce the tax hit! "Joint accounts" or those held solely in the name of the higher income partner will be taxed more heavily.

In the three examples below, assume "he" is the sole owner, $60,000 investor in a 42% tax bracket and "she" is the sole owner, $28,000 investor in a 27% tax bracket.

Example: Both invest in common shares (in an equity mutual fund) which produces $100 of investment income in the form of Capital Gains. After taxes are paid, he would retain $79 (she would retain $86).

Example: Both invest in preferred shares that produce $100 of investment income in the form of Dividends. After taxes are calculated (using the dividend tax credit), he would retain $64 (she would retain $83).

Example: Both invest in bonds and GICs, which produce $100 of investment income in the form of interest. After taxes are paid, he would retain $58 (she would retain $73).

Explanation:

- The full amount of interest income is taxed; only half of capital gains income is taxed.
- Higher income individuals are taxed more heavily in our progressive step-rated tax system than are lower income individuals.
- The result of these realities means that a non-registered account produces superior after-tax returns when: it contains securities that produce returns in the form of capital gains and dividends; *and* it is set up in the name of the lower income spouse.

In the example above, note the extreme difference between $86 retained in the lower income investor's capital gains earnings versus the $58 retained in the higher income investor's bond interest income.

Note: This is why Financial Advisors counsel clients to structure their family finances so that the higher income partner pays the monthly bills and regular expenses leaving the investing in the hands of the lower income partner.

c) Given the five-year timeframe, monitor and adjust your asset mix so that in the fourth and fifth years you favor bonds and cash, rather than stocks and preferred shares… to preserve your principal as the time approaches to liquidate your assets.

d) Since this is a non-registered account, the 30% foreign content rule does NOT apply. This means that foreign equities can play a part in your account without any restriction.

Tax Hint: Be aware that any capital losses on non-registered funds can be used to offset any capital gains on your current income tax return, or going back three years.

Short Term Investments: 1-2 Year Time Frame

Finally, we save for short-term goals such as an "emergency fund" or we can include any excess funds of a temporary nature. Here again we are talking about NON-registered investments. Strategies to grow these short-term savings are the same as above. Here rapid access to funds (liquidity) and capital preservation are the main concerns.

Some Other Issues: Before You Invest…

Two "outside-the-box" lines of thought that could be considered before investing:

1. Paying down "high-interest" debt is usually the wiser course to follow BEFORE deciding to invest;

2. Protecting your financial security means considering your primary financial asset, i.e. your ability to provide your family with a dependable income stream (that supports your entire lifestyle), which is protected from interruption in the case of accident or sickness. This means:

a) Disability insurance – to supplement your sick leave and to provide protection and peace of mind;

b) Ensuring an up-to-date will is in place, especially with children involved;

c) Ensuring ample life insurance is in place;

d) Ensuring other types of insurance are in place to mitigate any financial risks (health and dental insurance, home/tenant insurance, auto insurance, and travel health insurance (especially for trips outside Canada).

In short, before you deploy any discretionary money, think "defensively" to ensure your major financial risks have been covered. Once the main "what ifs" have been provided for, you can then begin to consider your investment options.

Pat Hogan is a retired teacher/principal. He is now a licensed Financial Security Advisor with Facey Financial Planning & Consulting. Pat would welcome inquiries, with no obligation, at 709-754-2143 or email: hogan@nl.rogers.com.

School Rep Seminars 2004

A Rewarding Experience

This past fall, the second in the series of NLTA school representative seminars were held in Gander, Goose Bay, and St. John's as part of NLTA's initiative to meet with school representatives each year. The intent is to keep school representatives informed and up to date on NLTA programs and services as well as inform new school representatives of their important role within the structure of the NLTA.

School Reps at the seminar held in Goose Bay review some case studies.

Teams of administrative staff from the NLTA planned and carried out the day and a half sessions throughout the province. The agenda items included a follow-up session on the topics from previous seminars, sessions on NLTA programs and services, Who's Who at the NLTA, the viewing of *The NLTA and You* video, a group discussion on What's a School Rep to Do?, which involved a review of case studies of various situations that school representatives may have to deal with, as well as a review of the School Representative Handbook. A question and answer session was included with each session and school representatives had an opportunity to provide feedback as well as ask questions on any issue that concerned them.

Feedback from the seminars was very positive and school representatives in attendance were appreciative of the time and work that went into the sessions. NLTA staff found the sessions to be just as rewarding as they were able to meet one-on-one with the NLTA school representatives and provide them with essential information about the NLTA.

Participants at the seminar in Gander discuss "What's a School Rep to Do?"

The province has been divided into nine regions, and three seminars will be held each fall so that schools will be provided the opportunity to have a representative attend a seminar every three years. The next series of seminars will be held in the fall of 2005. A notification of dates and locations will be announced as soon as they are available.

School Reps attending the seminar in St. John's get to know one another.

RESOURCES

A REFUGEE CAMP IN THE CITY: ON ASSIGNMENT

Medecins Sans Frontieres Canada (also known as Doctors without Borders or MSF) has just released an educational kit entitled *A Refugee Camp in the City: On Assignment*. The kit comprises a 60-page teacher's guide and a one-hour video (in four parts).

The video is a series of four cuts supporting the 15 lessons in the teacher's guide. A Canadian student on assignment brings the realities of a refugee camp to her viewers in the city. The script is both didactic and on the edge hip, as Anne Marie shares her research with her friend Simon, via interactive computer screen. The four themes (on the conceptual and practical realities of a refugee camp) are developed through clever cutaways to documentary footage, still photographs, or interview clips with MSF volunteers or Canadian students with understated vivid refugee camp histories.

For further information, go to www.msf.ca/refugeecamp/curriculum; e-mail: msfcan@msf.ca; or write to Director of Communications, MSF Canada, 720 Spadina Avenue, Ste. 402, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T9.

MARFAN SYNDROME RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The Canadian Marfan Association has numerous resources to support patients and families affected by Marfan Syndrome. Some of these resources include: the "How Do Your Genes Fit?" video created by students to help themselves, parents and schools understand and cope with Marfan Syndrome; a booklet for teachers; and a booklet for younger children entitled "A Very Special Mouse".

Further information on available resources can be found on the Association website, www.marfan.ca or by emailing info@marfan.ca.

PREPARING YOUTH TO DEAL WITH EMERGENCIES AND TRAGIC EVENTS

The Canadian Red Cross offers educators, free of charge, two programs designed to help youth and their families be prepared to cope with emergencies and tragic events.

Expect the Unexpected™ (www.redcross.ca/expecttheunexpected) is intended for students aged 7 to 13 and their families. It features lesson plans and activities on natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes.

Facing Fear™ (www.redcross.ca/facingfear) complements *Expect the Unexpected*™. It was developed to meet a demand from Canadian teachers in the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. *Facing Fear*™ includes lesson plans and activities designed to help youth aged 5 to 16 be prepared with the aftermath of terrorism and other tragic events.

HIT THE BOOKS

Using baseball as the overall theme, the Canadian Teachers' Federation's *Hit the Books* program is designed to improve literacy skills by supplementing existing curriculum and challenging students to strengthen their reading, writing and communication skills. The program includes education and motivational materials such as bookmarks, activity books, stickers and a word workbook. To view the materials or to order online, go to www.ctf-fce.ca and click on the resources link.

Calendar

SHARING OUR CULTURES/
À LA DÉCOUVERTE DE NOS CULTURES
March 20-22, 2005
Delta Hotel, St. John's. This is a unique opportunity for K-12 teachers and their students to experience a bilingual, interactive, curriculum-relevant, and hands-on approach to learning about diverse cultures. The Fair showcases 25+ countries and 20+ exhibits by government and community organizations. Admission is free but space is limited. Registration deadline is December 10, 2004. For information contact Lloydetta Quaicoe, Tel: 709-727-2372 or lquaice@nl.rogers.com.

2005 NATIONAL COUNSELLING CONFERENCE
May 24-27, 2005
St. John's. The Newfoundland and Labrador Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association (NLCPA) is co-hosting with the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA) the 2005 National Counselling Conference. The conference promises to be three days of interesting speakers, intensive professional development and Newfoundland hospitality. For more information check out the conference website at www.ccacc2005.ca or contact conference co-chairs Chris Cooper at ccooper@nf.sympatico.ca or Alana Walsh-Giovannini at alanag57@stemnet.ca.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE
May 25-26, 2005
College of the North Atlantic, Stephenville. For information contact Michael Murrin, Tel: 709-646-2822; Fax: 709-646-5263;

Dates to Remember

January 2005

Jan 9	**Final Deadline:** Nominations for NLTA President and Vice-President
Jan 14-15	NLTA Executive Meeting
Jan 15	**Deadline:** Receipt of Barnes, Bancroft, Allan Bishop, and Special Recognition Award Nominations at the NLTA office
Jan 20	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Jan 30	**Deadline:** All remaining material for Convention issue of *The Bulletin* (nominations for Provincial Executive, resolutions for BGM, branch delegates and branch alternates' names) must be postmarked by this date for inclusion in Convention issue of *The Bulletin*

February 2005

Feb 1	**Deadline:** Applications for Educational Leave – teachers must make prior application to school board
Feb 8	Election of NLTA President and Vice-President
Feb 14	Janeway Day in the Schools
Feb 17	NLTA Executive Meeting
Feb 18-19	Joint Council Meeting

March 2005

Mar 6-12	Education Week
Mar 17	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Mar 29-31	Biennial General Meeting
Mar 31	**Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year
Mar 31	**Deadline for Applications (on or before March 31):** Centennial Study Award; International Conference Presenters Program

NLTA Christmas Hours

Please be advised that the NLTA Building will be closed from December 24th to January 2nd (inclusive) to allow staff to enjoy the holiday season.